

# **Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Analysis**

## **Executive Summary**

Prepared by the Utah Department of Workforce Services WIA Task Force  
October 26, 1998

### **I. Background**

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA), public law 105-220, was signed into law by President Clinton on August 7, 1998. According to the National Governor's Association, "the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (H.R. 1385) rewrites current federal statutes governing programs of job training, adult education and literacy, and vocational rehabilitation, replacing them with streamlined and more flexible components of workforce development systems." Coordination rather than consolidation is the founding principle for this new law. Other key principles include: streamlining services, empowering individuals, universal access, increased accountability, strong role for local boards and the private sector, state and local flexibility, and improved youth programs.

The Department of Workforce Services has developed a WIA task force to analyze implications of the Act on the State of Utah and establish possible opportunities for Department improvement, as well as, national influence as we seek to set the national standard of a high-quality workforce by being the employment connecting point for employers, job seekers, and the community. Task force membership is as follows: Ron Ahlstrom, Chris Badalion, Mason Bishop, Darin Brush, Jim Finch, Greg Gardner (chair), Jennifer Gardner, Barbara Gittins, Bob Gross, Curtis Johnson, Kathleen Johnson, Mike Richardson, Ginger Smith, and Helen Thatcher.

The section by section WIA analysis prepared by the Department of Workforce Services task force is attached. This analysis paper establishes areas of compliance, opportunities for further agency collaboration and partnerships and strategies of implementation. Through this analysis in which we anticipate the needs of employers and job seekers, we seek to accomplish meaningful state and local planning. A summary of the detailed analysis is outlined below.

### **II. Analysis**

Due to the creation of Department of Workforce Services in 1996, Title 35A of the State Code, and the early development and implementation of the new workforce system beginning July 1, 1997, Utah is fortunate to be well along in the process of providing one-stop workforce services to customers. Thus, most of the collaborative system-building requirements in WIA have already been achieved and in many cases superseded by Utah's Department of Workforce Services.

The task force recommends that Department of Workforce Services implement WIA by July 1, 1999. The task force recommends that the Governor designate Utah as a single workforce investment area and that the State Council on Workforce Services be designated as the state and local Workforce Investment Board for the purposes of WIA. We also recommend that our

existing seven Regional Workforce Services Councils continue to play an active role in regional workforce planning.

Although Utah's workforce system is very advanced in comparison with other states and the vision of WIA, the task force did identify the following **major impacts** on our existing system.

- A. Youth Activities:** The Department needs to rethink its youth service strategy and the possibility of obtaining a Youth Opportunity Grant in the North region. WIA mandates that a Youth Council must be formed to operate as a subgroup of the Workforce Investment Board to prepare the youth portion of the services plan. The plan should address how closer linkages can be made with youth groups, in particular the juvenile justice system and Job Corps, and how the summer youth program can be an integrated part of a year-round youth program. The Department of Workforce Services needs to examine how it can provide youth services because the Act requires that youth grants and contracts be awarded on a competitive basis.
- B. Adult and Dislocated Worker Activities:** The adult pathway must be revisited to take into account WIA's "work first" emphasis which outlines three tiers of service; core, intensive, and training. Enhanced intensive case management needs to occur. The pathway must take into account the legislation's requirement that "individual training accounts", usually referred to as vouchers, must be used to pay for training of eligible workers by certified training providers. A "consumer report" system needs to be developed and implemented so that customers can make an informed choice when selecting a training provider.
- C. Performance Accountability System:** The existing JTPA performance system needs to be analyzed to determine what modifications are needed to comply with WIA requirements. The state level standards must be negotiated with USDOL. Department of Workforce Services must determine how these state standards will translate into regional standards. Also to be developed is a "performance and cost information system" to provide information to determine if the provider has performed acceptably and will continue to receive funds.
- D. System Redesign:** Financial, management and information technology systems will have to be redesigned to track and report the new data elements required by WIA.
- E. Unified Planning:** WIA allows the state to submit a unified plan to the appropriate federal Secretaries. The plan includes the programs administered by Department of Workforce Services plus programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act, Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, Title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965, training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development and programs authorized under

the Community Services Block Grant Act. This provision creates an opportunity for Utah to conduct comprehensive workforce development planning and develop a five year unified plan that creates a more seamless service delivery system.

**Minor changes** and action items as a result of WIA are identified below.

- A. Legislative changes regarding the membership of the State Council, such as adding two more State Senators and Representatives, a Youth Council representative and the Governor to the Council, are needed.
- B. A comparison of WIA and the GCSSP needs to take place identifying compliance issues, needed changes, opportunities for enhancement, etc. The staffing of the state planning process needs to be reassessed, as well.
- C. Appropriate partnerships with sectarian entities need to be researched.
- D. “Buy America” provisions are needed on all contracts and equipment purchases.

During this transitory time of implementation, the USDOL has asked that states provide information regarding the preferred role of USDOL in the implementation process of WIA. The guiding principle recommended by the task force is that USDOL allow states maximum flexibility to interpret the Act to develop programs that best meet the unique needs and structures in each state and region. Specific input to USDOL is outlined in the section by section analysis that follows.

### **III. Next Steps**

- A. Department of Workforce Services should actively participate in the development of WIA regulations being written by USDOL to ensure that states are given maximum discretion to interpret the Act. Department of Workforce Services should participate through its membership in national public interest groups such as ICESA, NGA, etc, and directly with the USDOL. The section by section analysis should be used to guide our effort.
- B. The task force should add a member of the Information Technology division to the task force, and reconvene and oversee the development of a Department of Workforce Services-wide work plan to implement WIA by July 1, 1999.